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Experimenting with subjectivity instantiated into gestures

“My soul at my fingertips”: My Avatar and Me

Recalling a sentence by the famous French pianist and pedagogue Marie Jaëll-Trautmann who said, “I will play with my soul at my fingertips”, I reflected on the role of performing gestures as an objectifiable aspect of the performer’s subjectivity. Music performance implies a union between soul/mind and body which instantiates the sound message as a felt experience. The energetic tension produced by the “soul” in the creative act of performing is spread at first throughout the entire body to reach finally the “fingertips”. Focusing on the primary role of the body in performance as a potential vehicle to capture subjectivism, I asked myself:

What would happen if I visualize my performing body by projecting it into a “body image”, an *avatar*? Can I use this pragmatic *avatar* of my-self to look at my subjectivity from an outsider’s perspective? Can I identify my lived experience as instantiated in my gestures through the lens of self-objectification based on empirical data?

The assumptions concerning the body as an interface of the performer’s intentionality in terms of sound producing and expressivity inspired me to investigate on my subjectivity through a “performative experiment” combining self-reflections and objective measurements of my bodily expressions during a performance.

My performative presentation wants to bring alive the dialectic relation between subjectivity and objectivity in piano performance practice by alternating my live piano performance with interactive reflections on my captured avatar projected on a screen as an objectification of my-self. From this specific angle, my presentation aims at experimenting with subjectivity the creative act of performing instantiated into gestures as a tactile sensation expressing the soul’s intentions. This approach constitutes a connection between gestures and intentionality in music performance and a mediation between scientific understanding and artistic concern.

Biography

Born in Italy and living in Brussels, Giusy Caruso is a professional concert pianist and artist researcher graduated *cum laude* in Piano and in Philosophy. Rewarded by important institutions, she carries on her concert activity throughout Europe, Asia and America though working as a PhD researcher at IPEM - Department of Musicology, Art, Music Performance and Theatre Studies at the University of Ghent in affiliation with the KASK - School of Arts of Ghent, Royal Conservatory. Her artistic research project involves an investigation on her piano performance practice of the *72 Etudes Karnatiques pour piano* by Jacques Charpentier (1933) while embracing the sphere of embodied music cognition, specifically the correlation between intentionality and musical gestures. Since 2011, she has been holding conference-concerts on her artistic research in many Universities and Institutions. Her recent article, *Le patrimoine musical indien dans le répertoire français contemporain pour piano de Olivier Messiaen et Jacques Charpentier*, was published on « Les Cahiers internationaux de symbolisme » (November 2015). www.giusycaruso.com